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ABSTRACT

This study explores connections between religion, civic engagement, and paternal involvement, using nationally representative data from the National Survey of Families and Households. Dependent variables are one-to-one interaction, dinner attendance, and youth-related activities. Results find that residential fathers who are involved in religious organizations are significantly more likely to have dinner with their children and be involved in youth-related activities such as the Boy Scouts or sports teams. These findings do not appear to be artifacts of a father's more generic integration into the social order. The study also finds that the links between religious involvement and paternal involvement are particularly strong for lower-income fathers. Finally, the study finds that non-religious forms of civic engagement are positively related to higher levels of paternal involvement. The paper concludes by calling for more private and public efforts to support and study the role that religious and non-religious civic institutions play in family life, particularly in low-income communities where declines in civic engagement have been most pronounced. (Contains 25 endnotes.) (SM)

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GOOD DADS:

RELIGION, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, & PATERNAL INVOLVEMENT IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

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CRRUCS REPORT 2001-4
John J. DiIulio, Jr., Founding Director, CRRUCS
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GOOD DADS:

Religion, Civic Engagement, & Paternal Involvement in Low-Income Communities

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Executive Summary

While the last decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in research on civil society, this work has largely overlooked potential links between civil society and the family. This study begins to fill this gap by exploring the connections between religion, civic engagement, and paternal involvement. I focus on religion because of its longstanding ties to childrearing and its historic status as an anchor of moral convention in low-income communities. Using nationally-representative data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), I find that residential fathers who are involved in religious organizations are significantly more likely to have dinner with their children and to be involved in youth-related activities such as the Boy Scouts or sports teams. Moreover, these findings do not appear to be artifacts of a father's more generic integration into the social order; statistical analyses that include measures of his non-religious civic involvement do not eliminate the net effect of religion on these two dimensions of paternal involvement. This study also finds that the links between religious involvement and paternal involvement are particularly strong for lower-income fathers, probably because religious organizations tend to be pillars of moral and social order in low-income communities. Finally, I find that non-religious forms of civic engagement are also positively related to higher levels of paternal involvement. I conclude by calling for more private and public efforts to support and study the role that religious and non-religious civic institutions play in family life, particularly in low-income communities where declines in civic engagement have been most pronounced.

The last decade has witnessed a dramatic increase in popular and intellectual interest in civil society. This interest has largely been driven by the recognition that civil society is a seedbed and spur for many of the values and virtues that shape American political life.[1] But the nation's communities of meaning, memory, and mutual aid also may play a crucial role in shaping the nation's non-political institutions. In particular, the longstanding ties between civil society and the family suggest that the health of American family life may depend, in good measure, on the vitality of civil society.

But there has been very little research exploring the relationship between civil society and the family. The current study focuses on this relationship by examining the links between religion, civic engagement, and one crucial dimension of contemporary family life—paternal involvement among residential fathers. I pay particular attention to religion because of its historic role in childrearing.[2] I also focus on the ways in which the effects of religion may differ by income. I do so because religious congregations play a unique role in low-income communities as institutional anchors of moral convention and decent living. Indeed, previous research indicates that religious influences on social behavior are particularly beneficial for low-income populations.[3] This is the first study to explore the associations between religion, civic engagement, and paternal involvement.

I chose to focus on paternal involvement for three reasons. First, given recent changes in the social status of women, male investment in family life is needed more than ever. Such investments generally signal to women that their partners value them and their children, and can contribute to higher marital quality and stability.[4] Second, men who are more actively involved as fathers can benefit socially and emotionally from the ties that they establish with their children.[5] Finally, and most importantly, paternal involvement among residential fathers is associated with a range of beneficial social and psychological outcomes for their children. Indeed, after taking into account the joint contributions of fathers and mothers to their children, one study found "that fathers are about as important as mothers in predicting children's long-term outcomes."[6] Thus, by exploring the connections between religion, civic engagement, and paternal involvement using data from the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), this study should provide some insight into the possible relationships between religion, civic engagement, and child well-being.

Religion and Fatherhood

Why might religious involvement foster paternal involvement among residential fathers? Essentially, there are four reasons that religious involvement may be linked to greater paternal involvement. First, the family-centered rituals and discourse associated with congregational life—from baptisms to Father's Day sermons—can invest family life with transcendent meaning in ways that spur men to devote themselves more to their families. Second, religious institutions usually offer a range of opportunities for fathers to spend time with their children—from attending Mass to teaching Sunday School. In this way, religious involvement may foster child-centered habits among fathers. Third, religious institutions tend to attract families with young children; in turn, these family-centered social ties provide social support for men in their role as fathers and social control of fathers who depart from community parenting norms.[7] Fourth, insofar as religious faith makes sense of suffering and misfortune, it can buffer against life stresses that would otherwise harm father-child interactions.[8]

There has been very little research on religion and fatherhood. The only study published on the subject using a nationally-representative sample found that conservative Protestant and high attending fathers are more likely to hug, praise, and spend time with their children.[9] More generally, a number of other studies have found that church attendance is associated with higher quality parent-child relations and with greater amounts of time spent by parents with their children.[10] Accordingly, I hypothesize that religious involvement is associated with greater levels of paternal involvement.

Civic Engagement and Fatherhood

Any religious effects on paternal involvement may, however, be an artifact of a man's wider integration into the social order or of his underlying orientation to the good life. In the case of the former, men who are churchgoers may also be actively integrated into a range of religious and non-religious civic institutions that furnish them with the virtues and social ties they require to be better fathers. Thus, civic engagement in general rather than religious involvement in particular may make these men better fathers.

There are two central reasons why generic civic engagement may be associated with greater paternal involvement. First, civic institutions foster virtues like leadership, good communication, and the prudential use of time.[11] The acquisition of these virtues may help

fathers better relate to their children and, consequently, encourage them to spend more time with their children. Second, the social ties that men establish through civic engagement may provide them with social support, social control, and local knowledge that makes them better fathers.[12] Social ties formed in non-religious civic institutions can furnish fathers with parenting advice and support when they are looking for help; such ties can also sanction parenting behavior that departs from community norms. Furthermore, the local knowledge acquired from these ties may also alert them to opportunities to join child-centered organizations and activities, such as the Boy Scouts. For these reasons, generic integration into the social order—measured by men's non-religious civic engagement—may be associated with greater paternal involvement, and such integration may reduce or eliminate the effect of religious involvement on paternal involvement.

Another possibility is that an underlying orientation to the good life—structured by a set of values and virtues—makes some men embrace fatherhood, religious involvement, and non-religious civic engagement. Such men would have acquired this orientation towards the good life through a combination of socialization and personal agency. Over the life course, family and friends furnish such men with role models of what it means to be a good citizen. But such men must also have chosen to adopt the requisite values and virtues that enable them to translate their encounters with decent men and women into an orientation that guides their own life. In this study, this prosocial orientation is also tapped by measuring fathers' civic engagement. Thus, if civic engagement reduces or eliminates the effect of religious involvement on fatherhood, this may also be an indication that this study is tapping an underlying orientation to the good life that structures men's involvement with their children, their religious congregations, and their communities.

No studies using nationally-representative samples have examined the effect of civic engagement on paternal involvement. However, a number of studies have explored the link between parental civic engagement and child well-being. One study of German parents found that fathers' (but not mothers') civic engagement is positively associated with the educational attainments of their children.[13] Another study of Iowa families found that parents' civic engagement is associated with positive educational and social outcomes among children; this same study also found that such engagement is associated with greater levels of parental involvement in youth-related activities.[14] These studies lend credence to the hypothesis that civic engagement is associated with paternal involvement.

Religion, Civic Engagement, and Fatherhood in Low-Income Communities

A number of studies have shown that religious institutions play a unique role in promoting the social and moral well-being of low-income communities.[15] In communities wracked by hopelessness, nihilism, discrimination, and poverty, churches, mosques, and temples are often the only institutional anchors—civic or otherwise—of social and moral order. They offer hope to the hopeless, succor to the suffering, and help to the homeless. Perhaps most importantly, these religious institutions promote a moral code of "decent" living—hard work, personal responsibility, and family-centered living—that stands in opposition to the "code of the street."[16]

Although there has been no quantitative research on the effects of religion on fatherhood in low-income communities, the ethnographic research of Elijah Anderson offers an eloquent testimony to the social and moral role that religion plays in the lives of good fathers—"decent daddies"—in inner-city Philadelphia. According to Anderson, the good father is a pillar of his community who "stands for propriety, righteousness, religion, and manhood" and "tries to supply [his family] not only with food, clothing, shelter, and other material things but with spiritual nurturance as well."[17] The good father fosters respect for authority, hard work, self-reliance, and God in his children through an intensive, strict parenting style. And "decent" fathers, as well as "decent" mothers and grandmothers raising children in low-income communities, "derive great support from their faith and church communit[ies]."[18] Thus, Anderson's work suggests that religious institutions play a key role in promoting a moral code of decent living in low-income communities.

Another reason that religious and other civic institutions may be more valuable to low-income fathers than to middle- and upper-income fathers is that low-income fathers do not have access to the same kinds of jobs that other fathers do. Middle- and upper-class men tend to work in jobs that require greater intellectual and social skills than the jobs held by low-income men. Their jobs also furnish them with greater access to high-status social networks that they can use to advance their children's well-being. Thus, in low-income communities, religious involvement and civic engagement may help men make up for the skills and networks that they do not encounter in their work environments.[19] This is another reason why religious and civic involvement may be particularly valuable for low-income fathers.

Anderson's ethnographic work, as well as the larger body of research on religion and civic engagement in low-income communities, suggests that religious and non-religious civic institutions may play a unique role in fostering a strong fatherhood orientation in low-income communities. Accordingly, this study also examines the extent to which religious and civic effects on residential paternal involvement differ by fathers' income.

Data and Methods

I rely on the 1987-1988 National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH1), a nationally representative survey of 13,017 adults age 19 and over, and its follow-up survey in 1992-1994 (NSFH2).[20] Using data from NSFH1 and NSFH2, my analyses focus on one subset of the data: 1,172 primary respondents who were residential fathers of school-age children (ages 5 to 18) during NSFH2. Specifically, residential fathers are defined as biological, adoptive, or step-fathers who were living with their children at the time of the survey. The statistics and analyses used in this study are based on weighted data, adjusted for oversamples of racial and ethnic minorities, families with step-children, single-parent families, and cohabiting couples.

For my dependent variables, I focus on respondent reports of activity in three areas of paternal involvement at NSFH2 (1992-1994): one-on-one interaction, dinner attendance, and youth-related activities. To measure *one-on-one interaction*, I relied on respondents' reports of involvement in four activities. Each father reported how often they spent "time with the children . . . in leisure activities away from home (picnics, movies, sports, etc.)? . . . at home working on a project or playing together? . . . having private talks? . . . helping with reading or homework?" Responses ranging from 1 (never or rarely) to 6 (almost every day) were summed to create a scale based on the mean response to each of the items (Cronbach's alpha = .78).

For *dinner attendance*, I relied on respondent's answers to the following question: "How many evenings last week did your whole family living here eat dinner together?" Responses were coded from 0 to 7. Fathers were also asked how many hours per week they spent in an average week as a participant, advisor, coach, or leader in the following *youth-related activities*: school activities, community youth groups (e.g., Scouts), sports activities, and religious youth groups. Due to rightward skewedness, I rely on the natural log of the sum total of hours devoted to these four activities to measure weekly paternal involvement in *youth-related activities*.

(Values of "0," i.e., no time devoted to youth-related activities, were recoded to ".01" before transformation). The NSFH does not specifically ask parents if the youth activities they participated in involved their own children. However, the questions about youth activities come in the middle of a battery of parenting questions. For this reason, as well as the fact that my sample is made up of residential fathers, I think it is safe to assume that most fathers are reporting on youth-related activities that involved their own children.

For my primary independent variables of interest, I rely on two sets of measures derived from NSFH1. Religious involvement was measured by participation in church-related organizations such as men's groups, Bible studies, and soup kitchens—from 1 (never) to 5 (several times a week). Civic engagement was measured by participation—from 1 (never) to 5 (several times a week)—in five different types of activity: *sports groups* (e.g., adult soccer leagues), *fraternal organizations* (e.g., veterans' groups and fraternities), *professional organizations* (e.g., professional associations or unions), *service organizations* (charitable and political groups), and *cultural activities* (hobby, literary, and arts-related groups). Note on Table 1 that more than a third of the sample participates in a church-related, sports, or professional organization. In total, about 82 percent of the sample participates in some kind of religious or civic organization.

I controlled for the following NSFH1 variables, which are known to be associated with paternal involvement and might otherwise confound any relationships between civic engagement and paternal involvement: respondent's *education* (from high school to graduate school, coded from 1 to 6); *age* (in years); respondent's *household income* (logged); *race/ethnicity* of the respondent (black; Hispanic; reference category=white/Anglo); *region* (South; Northeast; North Central; reference category=West).

I also control for the following family characteristics at NSFH2 because they are also known to be related to paternal involvement: biological composition of the family (a *blend* of biological and/or adopted children and step-children; *all biological and/or adopted children*; reference category: *all step-children*); gender of children (*all male children*; a *mix* of male and female children; reference category: *all female children*); and marital status of respondent (*single father*; reference category: *married father*). Finally, I also control for the following employment characteristics at NSFH2 since employment status and schedules are likely to directly influence

paternal involvement: a dummy variable measuring *employment*, a dummy variable tapping *shift work*, and average *weekly hours of employment*.

For each of my dependent variables, I estimated a series of two hierarchical ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models to determine the effects of religious involvement and civic engagement on residential paternal involvement. The first model, which includes the measure of church involvement and the full range of controls, analyzes the link between religion and paternal involvement. The second model adds five measures of civic engagement: sports, fraternal organizations, professional organizations, service organizations, and cultural activities. This model allows me to determine whether the effect of religion is an artifact of generic social integration or an underlying prosocial orientation; it also allows me to analyze the independent effects of civic engagement on paternal involvement. I also include two sets of ancillary models to examine whether the effects of religious involvement and civic engagement on paternal involvement vary by income: the first focuses on a subsample of fathers with incomes below the median of $30,350 in 1987-1988; the second focuses on subsample of fathers with incomes above the median of $30,350.

Results

Table 2 reports the results of regression models focusing on the effects of religious involvement and civic engagement upon residential paternal involvement in one-on-one activities (playing, reading, talking, and taking excursions with one's school-age children). Model 1 indicates that religious involvement is not associated with this type of paternal involvement. Model 2 indicates that three forms of civic engagement—men's sports, professional, and cultural activities—are positively associated with one-on-one interaction. These results suggest that the virtues and social ties associated with some forms of civic engagement—but not religious involvement—are linked to a more intensive approach to fathering. What is particularly interesting about these particular civic activities is that they are the most conventional activities in the sample. As Table 1 indicates, sports, professional, and cultural activities garner higher levels of participation than service or fraternal organizations. This may be because the most conventional activities best support community norms regarding parenting and offer more opportunities for fathers to learn about child-centered activities that

they can participate in with their children. Or these findings may reflect the fact that fathers with a prosocial orientation gravitate to the most conventional activities in their communities.

For the most part, the ancillary analyses of lower- and upper-income fathers reported in Table 2 indicate that the effects of civic engagement on one-on-one interaction do not differ by income. Specifically, for one-on-one interaction, the effects of professional and cultural activities are similar across the two subsamples. The primary exception to this pattern is that sports is a significant predictor of one-on-one involvement for upper-income men but not lower-income men. Accordingly, in this domain of paternal involvement, the effects of civic engagement do not generally differ by income.

However, Models 3 and 5 indicate that religious involvement is associated with higher levels of one-on-one interaction for lower- but not upper-income fathers. Nonetheless, Model 4 shows that the inclusion of civic engagement measures eliminates the net effect of religion. This may signal that the religious effect on lower-income fathers is an artifact of a broader pattern of social integration for these men. In other words, good fathers in low-income communities are more involved in one-on-one activities with their children not because of their religious commitments but because of their integration into the social fabric of their communities. An alternative interpretation is that fathers with a prosocial orientation in these communities frequent religious and civic institutions and spend more time with their children in one-on-one activities.

Table 3 tests the hypotheses regarding the influence of religious involvement and civic engagement on residential paternal involvement by focusing on paternal attendance at dinner. Men who are active in religious organizations are significantly more likely to have dinner with their children, according to Model 1. Standardized coefficient tests indicate that religious involvement is more strongly related to dinner attendance than factors like education, income, and region. Moreover, as Model 2 suggests, the association between religion and dinner attendance does not appear to be an artifact of some generic social integration or prosocial orientation, since civic engagement is not related to dinner attendance and the effect of religion remains robust to the specification of measures of civic engagement. In fact, Model 2 indicates that, on average, residential fathers who are involved with religious organizations several times a week have dinner with their school-age children on 31 more occasions per year than fathers who never participate in such organizations ([([5-1]*.147)*52]=30.57). Thus, Table 3 suggests that

religious involvement—but not civic engagement in general—orients fathers to one of the key rituals of domestic life: participating at the family dinner.

The ancillary analyses of lower- and upper-income fathers in Table 3 are striking. While religious involvement is consistently related to paternal dinner attendance, this relationship is only significant for lower-income fathers. In fact, the religious coefficient for lower-income fathers in Model 4 is more than 35 percent larger than the religious coefficient for upper-income fathers in Model 6. Interestingly, the reduction in the size of the religious coefficient from Model 3 to Model 4 suggests that one of the reasons that religious involvement is associated with paternal involvement is because it is associated with other types of social integration. In other words, the kind of lower-income fathers who have dinner often with their children may receive social and moral support for a family orientation from their religious and civic institutions. Alternatively, such fathers may have an underlying orientation to the good life that makes them focus on religious and civic life, as well as family activities like dinner.

However, Model 4 also indicates that religion has an independent effect on paternal dinner attendance among lower-income fathers even after controlling for civic engagement. Specifically, Model 4 indicates that, on average, lower-income fathers who participate in church-related organizations several times a week have dinner with their school-age children on 39 more occasions than fathers who never participate in such organizations ([([5-1]*.189)*52]=39.31) (see Figure 1). This suggests that fathers in low-income communities who frequent the family dinner table derive some of their motivation and support for family-centered living from their participation in religious congregations in their communities.

Table 4 examines the links between religious involvement, civic engagement, and the involvement of residential fathers in youth-related activities (Scouts, religious youth groups, PTA, and sports teams). Model 1 indicates that fathers who are actively involved in religious organizations are much more likely to participate in youth-related activities than fathers who are not involved in religious organizations. While the effect of religious involvement declines somewhat after the inclusion of measures of civic engagement in Model 2, it remains positive and significant. This means some, but not all, of the apparent effect of religious involvement on paternal involvement in youth-related activities is probably an artifact of fathers' integration into the social order of their communities or of his prosocial orientation.

Nevertheless, even after controlling for measures of civic engagement, Model 2 indicates that fathers who participate in religious organizations several times a week spend, on average, 104 more hours per year in youth-related activities than fathers who never participate in religious organizations ($[e^{(.173 \times 5.1)}]*52 = 103.88$). In fact, standardized coefficient tests reveal that religious involvement is one of the most powerful predictors of paternal involvement in youth-related activities, surpassing education, income, race, ethnicity, and all other forms of civic engagement. Thus, Table 4 suggests that the family-oriented values, virtues, and social ties associated with religious involvement have a strong, independent effect on paternal involvement among men.

Model 2 in Table 4 also reveals that some types of civic involvement—participation in cultural activities, sports activities, or professional organizations—are associated with higher levels of paternal involvement in youth-related activities. As noted above, these activities are the most conventional forms of civic engagement for my sample of residential fathers. These conventional activities may be uniquely able to furnish the community values, as well as local knowledge about child-centered activities, that propel fathers into spending more time in youth-related activities. Alternatively, fathers with an underlying prosocial orientation may be drawn to the most conventional activities in their communities.

Once again, the ancillary analyses conducted on lower- and upper-income fathers reported in Table 4 are striking. While they indicate that religious involvement is positively related to paternal involvement in youth-related activities for both lower-income and upper-income fathers, this relationship is only statistically significant for lower-income fathers. Moreover, the size of the religious coefficient for lower-income fathers in Model 4 is ten times larger than the coefficient for upper-income fathers in Model 6. This means that religion is uniquely beneficial for lower-income fathers in this domain of paternal involvement.

The decrease in the religious coefficient from Model 3 to Model 4, as measures of civic engagement are added to the model, suggests that some of the effect of religious involvement on the youth-related activities of low-income fathers is an artifact of fathers' generic integration into the social order. In other words, religiously-involved fathers in low-income communities may be more active in youth-related activities because they are just more integrated into their civic life in general. Indeed, Model 4 indicates that lower-income fathers who participate in sports organizations or service organizations (political or charitable organizations) are significantly more involved in youth-related activities. Alternatively, lower-income men who have a

predisposition to prosocial behavior may be engaged in a range of community activities including youth-related, religious and civic.

But the fact that the religious effects remain robust to the inclusion of the measures of civic engagement in Model 4 indicates that religious involvement has an independent effect on paternal involvement in youth-related activities above and beyond any generic effect of social integration. In fact, standardized coefficient tests reveal that religious involvement is more consequential for this type of paternal involvement than education, income, race, ethnicity, or any other form of civic engagement. Specifically, fathers who participate in religious organizations several times a week spend, on average, 169 more hours per year in youth-related activities than fathers who never participate in religious organizations ($[e^{(.295 \times 5.1)}]*52 = 169.22$) (see Figure 2). In other words, good fathers in low-income communities appear to be motivated by their involvement in religious organizations to participate at significantly higher levels in youth-related activities.

Conclusion

Taken together, Tables 2 through 4 provide strong evidence that religious involvement is positively related to two out of three domains of paternal involvement among residential fathers of school-age children. Consistent with the larger literature on religion and parenting, involvement in religious organizations is strongly associated with higher levels of family dinner attendance and involvement in youth-related activities among this nationally-representative sample of fathers. Moreover, this is the first study to test whether the relationship between religion and paternal involvement holds even after controlling for a father's integration into the larger social order. In this case, the positive relationship between religious involvement and paternal involvement in youth-related activities and dinner attendance holds even after controlling for five different measures of civic engagement, which are indicators of generic social integration. This suggests that the relationship between religion and paternal involvement is not an artifact of a father's generic social integration or of an underlying prosocial orientation. Moreover, in two out of three domains of paternal involvement, the effect of religious involvement surpasses the effect of other factors—such as income, education, and race/ethnicity—previously known to influence paternal involvement. Thus, this study provides strong evidence in support of the thesis that the family-centered values, virtues, and social ties

associated with religious institutions foster higher levels of paternal involvement among fathers with school-age children.

This is also the first study to examine whether the effects of religion on fatherhood differ by income. The findings documented in this study are particularly striking in this regard. The effects of religious involvement are consistently stronger for lower-income residential fathers than for higher-income residential fathers. In contrast to middle- and upper-income fathers who often benefit from advantaged work environments and high levels of education, lower-income fathers often lack the cultural, financial, and institutional resources that other fathers can draw upon as they develop relationships with their children. By providing opportunities for social participation and leadership, a religious message that makes sense of everyday life, and a strong commitment to a moral code of decent, family-centered living, churches, mosques, and temples help lower-income fathers make up for these deficits. The role of these religious institutions is particularly valuable in poor communities as so many of the other social and civic institutions in these communities are in disarray. Indeed, this study finds that, for lower-income fathers, religious involvement is more consistently and powerfully related to paternal involvement than any other form of civic engagement. This finding is consistent with recent research on educational achievement and crime, which indicates that religious effects are uniquely beneficial for members of poor communities.[21] In other words, religious institutions offer crucial moral, social, and spiritual support for good fathers striving to do right by their children in low-income communities.

This is also the first study using nationally-representative data to examine whether non-religious civic engagement is associated with higher levels of paternal involvement. I hypothesized that such engagement supplies fathers with three factors that may foster higher levels of paternal involvement: social virtues like leadership and communication, social support and social control regarding parenting norms, and access to local knowledge about child-centered activities and opportunities. Consistent with this hypothesis, I find that civic engagement is associated with higher levels of paternal involvement. Interestingly enough, the most conventional forms of civic engagement—participation in professional organizations, sports groups, and cultural activities—are also the forms of civic engagement most conducive to paternal involvement. In all likelihood, these activities best convey community norms about parenting and best provide access to helpful local knowledge about child-centered opportunities

to fathers. An alternative possibility is that men who hold an underlying orientation that encompasses community participation and an active fatherhood style gravitate to the most conventional activities. But even such men would probably be influenced by the virtues, values, and social ties encountered in civic institutions. Accordingly, the findings in this study suggest that civil society is a seedbed and stimulus to family-centered living for fathers living with their school-age children.

This study also has important implications for family life in general. Recent research suggests that residential paternal involvement promotes gender equity, psychological well-being among men, and—most importantly—child well-being.[22] Accordingly, this study suggests that paternal religious involvement and civic engagement may have positive, albeit indirect, effects on adults and children in families. This possibility seems particularly strong for low-income families. Accordingly, future research should determine how the religious involvement and civic engagement of fathers influences the well-being of adults and children, especially low-income children.

Thus, this study suggests that revived scholarly interest in civil society is well-deserved, and that this interest should extend beyond civil society's effect on political life to other domains of social life like the family. In this case, it would appear that the particular types of values, virtues, and social ties associated with religious and other civic institutions are conducive to a strong paternal orientation among residential fathers. This study also indicates that the benefits of religious involvement are particularly pronounced for lower-income fathers. Perhaps in part because they are less likely to have access to working environments characterized by occupational complexity and high status social networks, lower-income fathers seem to benefit more from the virtues, social knowledge, and networks found in religious congregations. Future research should determine the precise mechanisms through which religious involvement fosters greater paternal involvement, and perhaps other types of familial investments, among lower-income fathers.

The unfortunate irony is that while low-income men may benefit the most from civic engagement—at least in terms of fatherhood—they tend to be less integrated into civil society than more advantaged men.[23] Furthermore, recent declines in civic engagement have been most pronounced among low-income communities.[24] The religious and civic institutions of these communities have been severely taxed by increased concentrations of poverty, joblessness, and

social disorder, and by a popular culture that tends to glorify the oppositional "code of the street."[25] If this study is any indication, public and private efforts to improve family life among low-income communities must attend not only to improving access to educational and labor force opportunities, but also to efforts that promote the religious and civic health of poor communities around the nation.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Residential Fathers of School-age Children (NSFH2)

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Percent Some
Dependent Variables, NSFH2			
One-on-One interaction (1 to 6)	3.669	1.049	
Dinner attendance (0 to 7)	4.451	2.205	
Youth-related activities (hours, logged)	-0.305	1.945	
Religious Involvement			
Church organization	1.017	1.305	49%
Civic Engagement			
Sports	1.103	1.353	50%
Fraternal organizations	0.090	0.237	18%
Professional organizations	0.204	0.311	39%
Service organizations	0.161	0.406	17%
Cultural activities	0.296	0.562	29%
Control Variables, NSFH1			
Black	0.097	0.297	
Hispanic	0.118	0.323	
Education	2.639	1.321	
Age	36.427	7.036	
Household income (logged)	10.073	1.801	
South	0.354	0.478	
Northeast	0.183	0.387	
North Central	0.268	0.443	
West	0.196	0.397	
Control Variables, NSFH2			
Married	0.943	0.232	
Age of youngest child	9.200	4.918	
Preschool children	0.249	0.541	
School-Age children	1.823	0.816	
All step children	0.138	0.335	
Blend	0.054	0.365	
All biological children	0.818	0.401	
All male children	0.304	0.460	
Mixed gender	0.457	0.498	
All female children	0.239	0.426	
Employed	0.882	0.322	
Shift Work	0.412	0.493	
Weekly hours of employment	41.758	18.430	

Note: *N*=1,124.

Table 2: Coefficients from OLS Regression Models: Paternal Involvement In One-on-One Activities with School-age Children (NSFH2)

			Lower-income[b]		Upper-income[b]	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Religious Involvement						
Church organization	0.013	-0.016	0.089*	0.041	-0.028	-0.040
Civic Engagement						
Sports		0.060**		0.000		0.102**
Fraternal organizations		0.001		0.160		-0.235
Professional organizations		0.395***		0.345*		0.355*
Service organizations		-0.005		0.088		-0.046
Cultural activities		0.135*		0.140		0.149
Control Variables						
Age	-0.010*	-0.009				
Education	0.148***	0.125***				
Household income (logged)	0.095**	0.080*				
Black	0.018	-0.040				
Hispanic	0.364**	0.362**				
Single	0.545***	0.548***				
Age of youngest child	-0.098***	-0.096***				
Preschool children	-0.505***	-0.479***				
School-Age children	-0.169***	-0.146***				
All male children	0.204*	0.209*				
Mixed gender	0.111	0.096				
Blend	0.167	0.136				
All biological children	0.389***	0.403***				
South	-0.031	-0.013				
Northeast	0.005	0.013				
North-central	-0.083	-0.104				
Employed	0.233	0.302				
Weekly hours of employment	-0.008**	-0.009**				
Intercept	3.658***	3.545***	3.603***	3.403***	0.987	0.688
Adjusted R-squared	0.205	0.233	0.204	0.230	0.241	0.269
N	1073	1073	508	508	565	565

*$p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

[b]The models for lower- and upper-income fathers control for all the sociodemographic variables included in Models 1 and 2.

Source: NSFH, Waves 1 and 2.

Table 3: Coefficients from OLS Regression Models: Paternal Dinner Attendance (NSFH2)

			Lower-income[b]		Upper-income[b]	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Religious Involvement						
Church organization	0.170***	0.147**	0.244**	0.189*	0.118	0.120
Civic Engagement						
Sports		0.018		0.002		0.008
Fraternal organizations		-0.246		-0.028		-0.762
Professional organizations		0.225		0.118		0.141
Service organizations		0.116		0.275		0.122
Cultural activities		0.164		0.233		0.068
Control Variables						
Age	0.002	0.003				
Education	-0.012	-0.030				
Household income (logged)	-0.017	-0.019				
Black	-1.375***	-1.399***				
Hispanic	0.297	0.298				
Single	0.002	0.008				
Age of youngest child	-0.113***	-0.113***				
Preschool children	-0.365*	-0.349*				
School-Age children	-0.157	-0.148				
All male children	0.008	0.014				
Mixed gender	-0.092	-0.096				
Blend	0.264	0.252				
All biological children	0.536**	0.550**				
South	0.364*	0.371*				
Northeast	0.496*	0.507**				
North-central	0.201	0.180				
Employed	-0.086	-0.042				
Weekly hours of employment	-0.004	-0.004				
Shift work	-0.719***	-0.735***				
Intercept	5.721***	5.645***	5.407***	5.217***	4.559*	4.552
Adjusted R-squared	0.094	0.094	0.072	0.070	0.154	0.151
N	1124	1124	538	538	585	585

*$p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

[b]The models for lower- and upper-income fathers control for all the sociodemographic variables included in Models 1 and 2.

Source: NSFH, Waves 1 and 2.

Table 4: Coefficients from OLS Regression Models: Paternal Involvement In Youth-related Activities with School-age Children (NSHF2)

			Lower-income[b]		Upper-income[b]	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
	b	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*	*b*
Religious Involvement						
Church organization	0.235***	0.173***	0.411***	0.295***	0.031	0.016
Civic Engagement						
Sports		0.162***		0.252***		0.086
Fraternal organizations		0.238		0.288		0.164
Professional organizations		0.448*		0.216		0.547
Service organizations		0.122		0.568*		0.014
Cultural activities		0.228*		0.194		0.088
Control Variables						
Age	-0.010	-0.006				
Education	0.196***	0.153**				
Household income (logged)	0.014	-0.026				
Black	0.564*	0.452				
Hispanic	0.553*	0.573*				
Single	0.194	0.157				
Age of youngest child	-0.063**	-0.062**				
Preschool children	-0.569***	-0.535***				
School-Age children	0.120	0.156				
All male children	0.618***	0.621***				
Mixed gender	0.479**	0.460**				
Blend	0.234	0.186				
All biological children	0.304	0.333				
South	0.134	0.180				
Northeast	0.230	0.251				
North-central	0.036	0.006				
Employed	0.516	0.592				
Weekly hours of employment	-0.004	-0.004				
Intercept	-1.472	-1.560	-1.030	-1.234	1.167	0.928
Adjusted R-squared	0.097	0.128	0.147	0.200	0.098	0.104
N	1005	1005	472	472	532	532

*$p<.05$ **$p<.01$ ***$p<.001$

[b]The models for lower- and upper-income fathers control for all the sociodemographic variables included in Models 1 and 2.

Source: NSFH, Waves 1 and 2.

N=1005.

Figure 1: The Influence of High Religious Involvement on Fathers' Annual Dinner Attendance (by income)

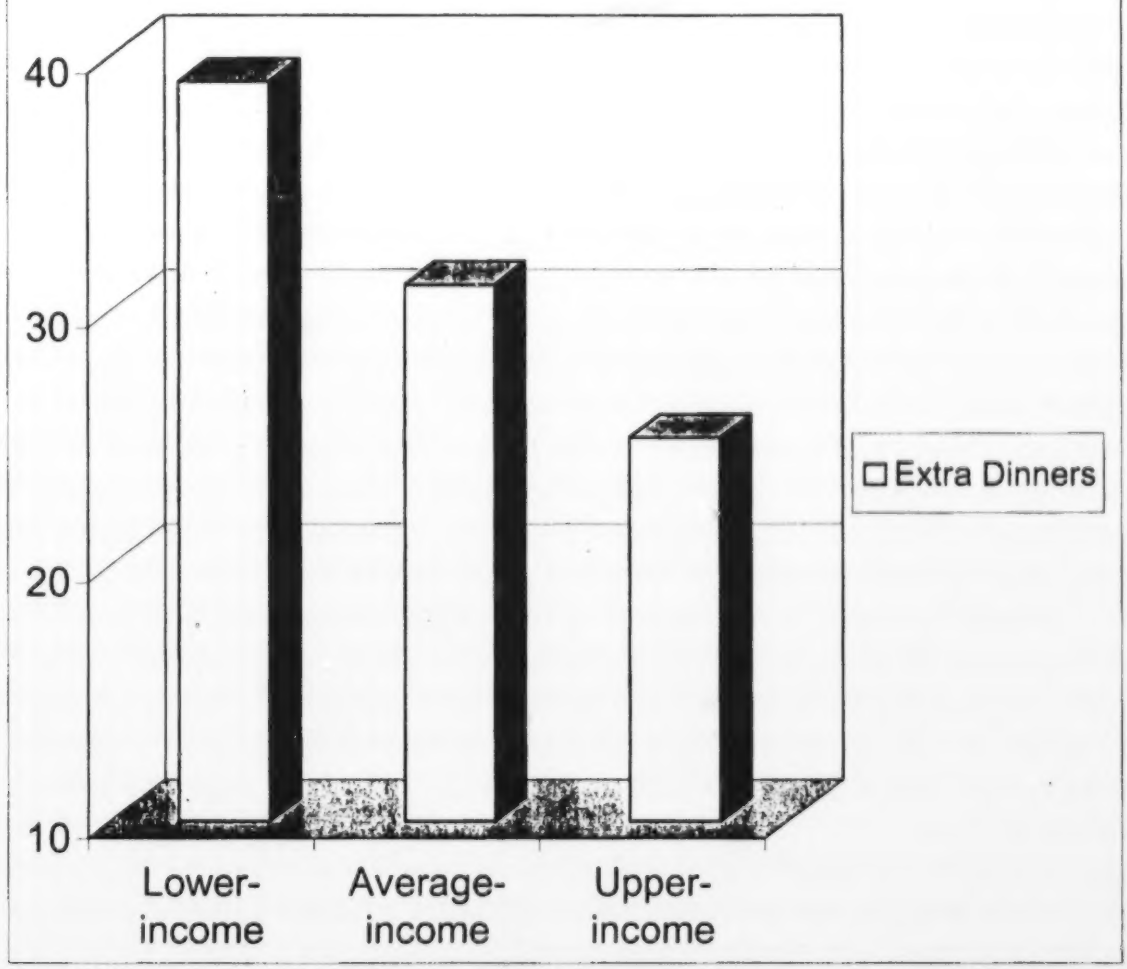
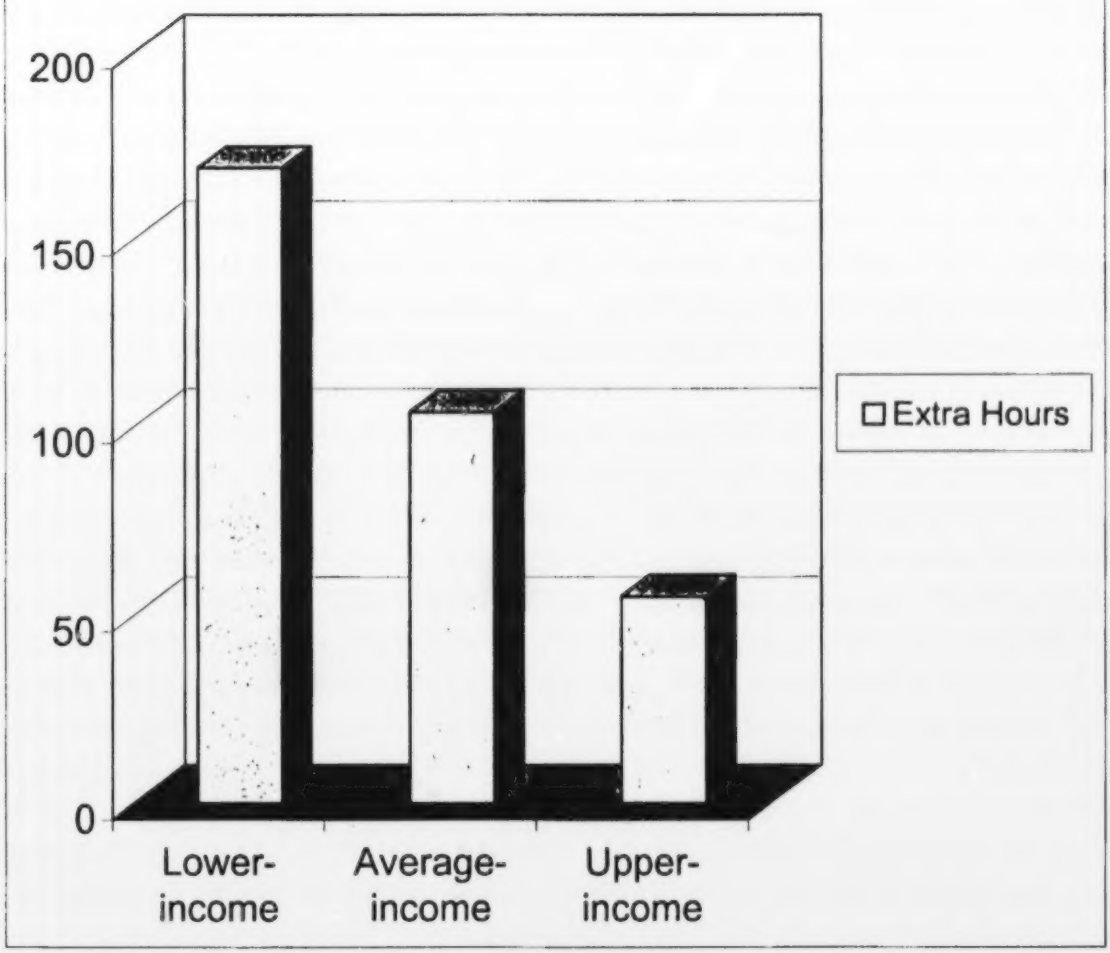


Figure 2: The Influence of High Religious Involvement on Fathers' Annual Hours Devoted to Youth-related Activities (by income)



Endnotes

[1] See, for example, Robert Putnam. 2000, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster; and, Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press

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[14] Elder and Conger, 2000.

[15] See, for example, Johnson, 2000; and, Regnerus, 2001.

[16] Elijah Anderson, 1999. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

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[22] See, for instance, Amato, 1998.

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